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## INTERLANGUAGE ANALYSIS OF SYNTACTIC AND DICTION ERRORS FOUND IN THESES WRITTEN BY *MAGISTER* STUDENTS

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### Abstract

Postgraduate students are expected to show more advanced writing skill than others. However, the writer observed that they still made some errors in their thesis writing. Having reread the theses written by graduate students, Linguistic Surface Category and Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt & Krashen were utilized to analyze the data. It was found that syntactic errors (89%) such as subject-verb agreement (15.42%), tenses (15.71%), redundancy (13.14%), article (7.71%), and pluralization (6.28%) are the most frequent errors occurred. While lexical errors (11%) such as wrong selection of verb (5.14%) and adjective (3.14%) also still made by graduate students. The study revealed that intralingual interference still be the cause of the blunders in writing a thesis. It is hoped that the present study could initiate university students to contemplate that self-correction and self-awareness in making errors in scholarly writing are essential. Emphasizing more assignments in academic writing can be applied by the lecturers of higher education know students' ability and train students to write academically. Faculty of teacher training of education should afford students with seminars and workshop of academic writing to motivate them to write and enhance their knowledge about academic writing.

**Keywords:** interlanguage, error analysis, graduate students' errors

### Introduction

When learners learn a second or a foreign language, they tend to make errors. Errors are an inevitable part of the natural process in acquiring and learning a new language. Everyone makes errors when she or he constructs a new utterance of a new language. However, regarding this natural process of learning, errors cannot be seen as an offense. Instead, errors could help the learners to be more aware of the blunders they have made in a professional way. Having a good writing skill is an undeniable benefit for students. Hourani (2008) confirms that writing skill involves many other sub-skills like the general knowledge about the subject in question and the ability to translate ideas into grammatical sentences. According to Graham and Perin (2007), writing is regarded as an essential skill which has to

be possessed by the students because it is an academic success predictor and a basic requirement for participation in social and global life. Thus, making errors in writing is unavoidable, especially if students write passages in a short-period of time. Wrong use of tenses, pluralization and other parts of speech are often found in students' writing that can lead university students to be unsuccessful in formulating good sentences in academic writing. It could be understood that writing in the target language is not an easy task, because it is different with writing in the first language. Manzolim and Gumpal (2015) exclaim that students' errors in writing is due to the interference of first language which effects the English grammar construction. Besides, learners also have their own linguistic knowledge to rely on when they compose their target language, or rather a linguistic system which is named as interlanguage (IL). The use of correct words or vocabulary in a text is the key to enhance and develop academic writing competence of foreign or second language learners other than linguistic and communicative ability (Sajid, 2016). In addition, syntax and diction are essentials in enhancing students' writing skill academically. Hence, it is worth noticing that students' writing in university levels are needed to be investigated. Budiharto (2014) discovered that English department students of Madura University still made errors in writing their thesis proposals. The findings showed that the university students often use complex sentences such as adjective clauses, noun clauses and adverbial clauses. Further, Sinaga and Sihombing (2014) also revealed that graduate students of English Department and Applied Linguistics of the State University of Medan still made syntactical errors in their theses' writing with the total of erroneous sentences are 387 sentences.

The above study findings prove that syntactic errors are major process in students' academic writings that involve more complex sentences rather than simple sentences. Consequently, they should be eligible in composing good sentences in their academic writing. According to Sajid (2016) graduate students are expected to have developed academic writing competence and must show novice writers other than linguistic and communicative capability. Regarding the importance of examining error analysis in students' writing and the initial studies above, the writer considered that it was crucial to conduct a study of an analysis of the linguistic system occurred in learners' language. Based on observation, the writer found out that *Magister* students of Language Education Study Program Sriwijaya University Palembang still made syntactic and diction errors in their theses writing. Syntactic errors found such as errors in using tenses, wrong used of articles, agreement, and inappropriate used of lexical items. Hence, it is worth noting to investigate students' errors, especially errors made by university students. It is important to describe kinds of syntactic and diction errors that students made, the possible causes of the errors and the possible ways to eliminate those errors. By examining error analysis study, students and teachers could be more aware of the kinds of the errors and find better methods in teaching and learning.

## Method

Content analysis study was the design of this research with the qualitative approach. Qualitative research investigates the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials (Fraenkle & Wallen, 2009). The writer endeavored to search for deep information of the materials that was going to be analyzed. The writer also portrayed and categorized the data according to the research problems.

### *Objects/Data Collection*

The researcher applied documentation technique in collecting the data. Then, some steps were conducted in selecting the sample; (1) reading comprehensively chapter 1 and 4 from 118 theses to identify the errors and mistakes, (2) taking notes for each theses in each academic year to select the theses that contain syntactic and diction errors, which then 16 theses were selected, (3) taking pictures of the sentences that contained errors from chapter 1 and chapter 4 (4) analyzing the erroneous sentences.

Theses written by *Magister* students of Language Education Study Program of Sriwijaya University in the academic years of 2014, 2015, 2016 were the objects of this study. Two considerations were taken into account in selecting theses of these three academic years, namely; (1) the researcher wanted to take the current theses, (2) the errors occurred in theses of these three academic years were much more frequent rather than theses written in academic year of 2011, 2012 and 2013, which was found more mistakes than errors. There were 47 theses in the academic year of 2014, 42 and 29 theses respectively in the academic years of 2015 and 2016, with the total number of them were 118 theses as the population. However, of the 118, the researcher took 16 theses as the sample. Six theses represented the academic year of 2014, and respectively each academic year of 2015 and 2016 were taken five theses.

The sixteen theses were chosen based on three considerations; (1) the researcher focused only on syntactic and diction errors found in chapter 1 and chapter 4, (2) sentences were regarded as mistakes were not taken into account, (3) out of 118 theses, only 16 theses that regarded containing errors on syntactic and diction errors. Since the theses have five different chapters, the researcher focused on chapter 1 and chapter 4 only as the object of the research due to some reasons, namely; 1) chapter 1 and chapter 4 contained more of students' own writing, 2) chapter 2 and chapter 3 were more focus on the theories, so there were a number of citations and quotations found, 3) chapter 5 was the rearranged of chapter 4 whereby the result and discussion was explained.

### *Data Analyses*

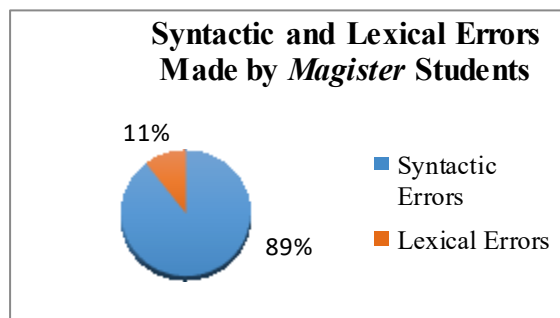
In analyzing the data, the writer used Linguistic Surface Category and Surface Strategy Taxonomy. There were some steps that the writer did in analyzing the data, they were; 1) collecting all the chapter 1 and 4 from 16 theses that contained syntactic and diction errors, 2) reading comprehensively each sentence in chapter 1 and chapter 4, 3) identifying the errors by using Linguistic Surface Category and Surface Strategy Taxonomy, 4) classifying the errors by using Linguistic Surface Category and Surface Strategy Taxonomy, 5) describing the syntactic and diction errors based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy, and 6)

explaining the syntactic and diction errors in order to elaborate to some effective remedial measures.

### Findings and Discussion

After analyzing the 16 theses of *Magister* students of Sriwijaya University in the academic year of 2014, 2015 and 2016, there were 249 erroneous sentences found containing 350 syntactic and lexical errors. The types of syntactic errors were subject-verb agreement, tenses, gerund, passive, article, preposition, word order, redundancy, parallelism, modality, noun, verb, pluralization, relative pronoun, possessive pronoun, correlative conjunction, and syntactic ambiguity with the total number 310 (89%). Forty (11%) were classified as lexical errors. The types of lexical errors dealt with verb, adjective, noun, adjective phrase, and verb phrase. The number of erroneous sentences was less than the total number of errors found because one sentence could contain more than one error. The chart and table below show the occurrence of the two types of errors.

**Chart 4.1. Kinds of Errors Made by Magister Students**



**Table 4.1 Kinds and Frequencies of Syntactic & Diction Errors**

Types of Syntactic Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Subject Verb Agreement	54	15.42
Tenses	55	15.71
Gerund	7	2
Passive	16	4.57
Article	27	7.71
Preposition	18	5.14
Redundancy	46	13.14
Modality	3	0.85
Parallelism	5	1.42

Noun	9	2.57
Verb	15	4.28
Pluralization	22	6.28
Possessive Pronoun	4	1.14
Relative Pronoun	11	3.14
Correlative Conjunction	1	0.28
Syntactic Ambiguity	13	3.71
Word Order	4	1.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>100</b>
Types of Lexical Errors		
Verb	18	5.14
Adjective	11	3.14
Noun	7	2
Adjective Phrase	1	0.28
Verb Phrase	4	1.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total Number of Syntactic and Diction Errors</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100</b>

### Syntactic Errors

#### *Subject Verb Agreement*

Errors in subject verb agreement basically included three subcategories in the present study: errors in subject-predicate agreement, errors in subject-verb agreement, errors in determiner and noun and errors in pronoun-antecedent agreement. This type of errors accounted for 15.42% (54) of the total syntactic errors in the present study and can be illustrated by the following examples.

*Examples:*

1. \*It means that in order to be successful in reading comprehension, the readers need to motivate his/herself to have more concentration in reading.  
(disagreement pronoun-antecedent)  
→ It means that in order to be successful in reading comprehension, the readers need to motivate themselves to have more concentration in reading.
2. \*This media requires students to see the real world from what will be delivered in front of the classroom (Disagreement of subject & verb)  
→ This medium requires students to see the real world from what will be delivered in front of the classroom
3. \*Therefore, the writer had to designed the recount texts first ...(Malformation-archie forms attachment of the past marker to the dependent verb)  
→ Therefore, the writer had to design the recount texts first...

### ***Tenses***

Fifty five (15.71%) errors were found in tenses. Errors in using tenses or shifting tense from present tense to past tense were the most frequent errors found, or vice versa. At the main clause, *Magister* students wrote the correct form of past tense, but in the second sentence or subordinate sentence, they produced present sentences which did not fit the main clause, that should be pasted. The examples are described below:

4. \*In dealing with self-confidence, students of...faced many problems when they are asked to speak English. (tense sequence)

→ In dealing with self-confidence, students of...faced many problems when they were asked to speak English.

5. \*Besides, the date given by ...showed that only 168 students visit the library to read the books from January to October 2014 (Tense sequence)

→ Besides, the date given by...showed that only 168 students visited the library to read the books from January to October 2014.

### ***Gerund***

The occurrence of gerund is 2% (7) of the total errors found in the present study. Errors found in gerund were related to wrong use of 'to infinitives' and 'bare infinitives' and the use of 'verb-ing' after preposition. For instance:

6. \*The poetry also provided the key words that students would use to write the text; here they began to try to understand the meaning of the text. (problems in using 'to infinitive')

→ The poetry also provided the key words that students would use to write the text; here they began trying to understand the meaning of the text.

7. \*15% students just expressed their idea without used creative and logical idea (verb-ing after preposition)

→ 15% students just expressed their idea without using creative and logical idea

### ***Passive***

The *Magister* students still make 15 or 4.8% incorrect and inappropriate form of passive sentence. Some examples are below:

8. \*The result of questionnaire was described the students response after they taught by sociogram. (active sentence becomes passive, passive sentence becomes active)

→ The result of questionnaire described the students' response after they were taught by sociogram technique.

9. \*The questionnaire only gave to the students in experimental class after gave the treatment. (omission verb in passive, passive sentence becomes active)

→ The questionnaire was only given to the students in experimental class after they were given the treatment / after the treatment.

### **Article**

The total errors of article was 26 (8.28%). Addition of article 'the' is the most dominant error found in students' sentences, followed by addition of article 'a' and 'an', omission, and some misuse of articles. Examples:

10. \*The students were encouraged to be the independent learners to do their best. (addition of article 'the')

→ The students were encouraged to be independent learners to do their best...

11. \*Next, the writer wanted to know the students wanted when they got new topic. (omission of article)

→ Next, the writer wanted to know the students wanted when they got a new topic.

12. The result of this study is expected to give a contribution for students in English Education Study Program of...

→ The result of this study is expected to give some contribution for students in English Education Study Program of...

### **Preposition**

Preposition errors occurred 15 (4.8%). The errors were divided into addition and misuse of preposition.

13. \*The result of this study is expected to give a contribution for students in English Education Study Program of...(misuse of preposition)

→ The result of this study is expected to give some contribution to students of English Education Study Program of...

14. \*It can be assumed that ..to help the students to practice contextual clues in every meeting was resulting in a significant vocabulary growth..(addition of preposition)

→ It can be assumed that ..to help students to practice contextual clues in every meeting resulted a significant vocabulary growth..

15. \*Learning a language means trying to get a good mastery of the language for the purpose as communication. (misuse of preposition)

→ Learning a language means trying to get a good mastery of the language for the purpose of communication.

### **Redundancy**

Redundancy of the sentences occurred 46 (14.64%) of the total errors. It is not because the *Magister* students did not understand the form of the English tenses, or subject-verb rules, but it is probably because the students wanted to strengthen their sentences and add much more information. Some examples are below:

16. \*Reading is regarded as one of the most important skills that a student must acquire at school since one must learn to read in order to be able to read to learn.

- Reading is regarded as one of the most important skills that a student must learn at school.
- 17. \*By having good English, people can do have communication with other people around the world who also use English as mean of communication.
- By having good English, people can communicate with other people around the world who use English as well.
- 18. \*In reading a text students should be good readers in order to comprehend what they read in the texts.
- Students should be good readers in order to comprehend what they read in the texts.

### **Modality**

Three or 0.95% were found in modality. It seems that the students were not aware of the structure of modality. Take examples below:

- 19. \*From this result, the writer knew that the students can easy to understand the story if they knew the relationship among the characters in the story. (omission of verb in modality)
- ...the writer knew that the students can easily understand the story if they knew the relationship among the characters in the story.
- 20. \*Where she must recalling what the students' already know about the topic... (misuse of verb in modality)
- ...where she must recall what the students already know about the topic..

### **Parallelism**

Parallelism contributed 4 or 1.27% of the total errors. The students could correctly produce the complex sentence, but the grammatical structure is not the same. Take the example below:

- 21. \*There were four major issues based on the results of the questionnaires; they are vocabulary, facility, motivation, and the environment.
  - There were four major issues based on the results of the questionnaires; they are vocabulary, facility, motivation, and environment.
  - 22. \*It is hoped that they are able to find out better media and strategy of teaching listening skills.
  - It is hoped that they are able to find out better media and strategies of teaching listening skill.
- This study could help the students *to improve* their vocabulary and *aided* them to comprehend an English text well.

### **Verb**

The most frequently errors found in verb construction were caused by omission verbs. Thirteen errors or 4.14% were counted as verb errors. Two examples are below:

- 23. \*And the result was ...students able to understand (omission of to be)
- ...students are able to understand



24. There some strategies can be used by teachers to improve their learners such as.. strategy.

→ There are some strategies can be used by teachers to improve their learners such as.. strategy.

Students *were* mostly *agreed* and interested in learning to read English texts through interactive multimedia

The expert *reviewing* the product was an English lecturer in...

### ***Noun***

The problems in noun was that the students used noun as adjective. The noun errors occurred 4 (1.27%). The examples are shown below:

25. ...they were brave to speak out their ideas and opinion, and they became more confidence in the discussion. (noun instead of adjective)

→ ...they were brave to speak out their ideas and opinion, and they became more confident in the discussion

### ***Pluralization***

The errors found in pluralization occurred 23 (7.32%). There are some plural forms which are written singular, or some similar singular and plural form of a sentence were made plural. Take examples below:

26. \*After seeing the students grade which was taken from their daily test, mid test and semester test the writer knew that...

→ After looking at the students' grades which were taken from their daily tests, mid tests and semester tests...

27. \*The first issue deals with a great number of vocabularies needed..

→ The first issue deals with a great number of vocabulary needed..

### ***Possessive Pronoun***

Four or 1.27% were found as possessive pronoun. The errors were about the wrong use of possessive pronoun or the addition of possessive pronoun in correct structure of a sentence.

28. \*...they sister helped them in choosing the books. (misuse of possessive pronoun)

→ ...their sister helped them in choosing the books.

29. \*If we use this strategy, reading will not be a waste of our time (addition of possessive pronoun)

→ If we use this strategy, reading will not be a waste of time.

It showed that the students had *the* equal *ability in Speaking ability* and *their self confidence*

### ***Relative Pronoun***

Most of the sentences that students used in their theses writing were in compound and compound-complex sentences which meant that relative pronoun should be

used. 11 or 3.50% of the errors found were stated as error in the use of relative pronoun. The errors could be either omission of relative pronoun or misuse of relative pronoun. Some examples are below:

30. \*The main idea of a passage is overall fact, feeling, or idea the author wants to convey about the subject.(Omission of relative pronoun)

→ The main idea of a passage is overall fact, feeling, or idea that the author wants to convey about the subject.

31. \*Next, the writer wanted to know the students wanted when they got new topic. (Misuse and omission of relative pronoun)

→ Next, the writer wanted to know what the students wanted after they got a new topic

*It indicates reading is important because it provides access to information*

### ***Correlative Conjunction***

One error or 0.31% was found in the use of correlative conjunction. The example is below:

32. \*Moreover, we need to involve students in thinking, not just about the content of listening, but more importantly about the process of listening. (misformation of correlative conjunction)

→ Moreover, we need to involve students in thinking, not only about the content of listening, but also more importantly about the process of listening.

### ***Syntactic Ambiguity***

Many sentences were found ambiguous since they had two meanings within one sentence. 11 sentences or 3.50% of the total sentences were considered as ambiguous sentences or syntactic ambiguity. For example:

33. \*The issues must also be observed by the educators and the educational institutions and other stakeholders are trying to create a situation motivate students to read.

→ The issues must also be observed by the educators, educational institutions, and other stakeholders who are trying to create situation so that the students are motivated to read.

### ***Word Order***

Four (1.27%) errors were also found in the sentence, that was word order error. The example is below:

34. \*The one who reads a lot will improve his / her vocabulary so he/she can comprehend the text easily and they will become life-long readers.

→ The one who reads a lot will improve his / her vocabulary so he/she can comprehend the text easily and she / he will become long life readers.

### Lexical Errors

Of 283 errors, 33 (12%) were diction errors. Students failed to make correct words in their theses. Most of diction errors found were in the use of verb, but the writer found wrong choice of noun as well. The examples are below:

35. \*She thinks that it is necessary to make an experiment in reading comprehension by applying...

→ She thinks that it is necessary to conduct an experiment in reading comprehension..

36. \*Because of those problem most of clienteles who were mostly English students couldn't find enough sources for their needs especially for making home works or their final projects.

→ Because of those problems, most clienteles who were mostly English students could not find enough sources for their needs especially for doing homeworks and final projects.

37. \*The last, the students were in second semester of their school.

→ The last, the students were in the second semester of their college/university.

### Discussion

Regarding the results of the study, it could be interpreted that *Magister* students made syntactic and diction errors as the result of their intralingual interference rather than their interlingual interference. Three kinds of intralingual errors are mentioned in the previous section to be regarded as the possible causes of the errors they made. However, the writer infers some lines regarding the errors that *Magister* students made. First, the errors of syntax and diction were still made by *Magister* students. After analyzing the 16 theses in the academic year of 2014, 2015 and 2016, 239 sentences were found containing errors. Of the 238 sentences, 314 were detected as syntactic and diction errors. The kinds of syntactic errors were subject-verb agreement, tenses, gerund, passive, article, preposition, word order, redundancy, parallelism, modality, noun, verb, pluralization, relative pronoun, possessive pronoun, correlative conjunction, and syntactic ambiguity. This result is in line with Sinaga and Sihombing (2014) that graduate students still made syntactical errors, and Silalahi (2014) which confirmed that university students still committed errors such as article, preposition, spelling, word choice, subject-verb agreement, auxiliary verb, plural form, verb form, capital letter, and meaningless sentences. The error in the choice of words is also in line with Ahour and Mukundan (2012), state that "Some variations were also found in the word choice of the students in the three ethnic groups of the study, whereby these choices might be the reflections of their cultural background and world view" (pg.55).

Second, errors that *Magister* students made were caused by their intralingual interference. Al-kresheh (2016) explains that intralingual interference as one of the major linguistic factors that affect the process of SLA, it is quite important to discuss the general characteristics rule of language learning that has been reflected by intralingual errors. In fact, *Magister* students tended to ignore the rule of English, wrong used of appropriate analogy in certain context and overgeneralized

the rules by their exist knowledge of their TL. Take for instance, *Magister* students wrote *vocabularies* for plural form of *vocabulary*, instead of *vocabulary*, because the plural or singular of word *vocabulary* is similar. They also overgeneralized the lexical item to strengthen their opinion, but inappropriate context, “very urgent” and “very necessary” for example. Turton and Heaton (1996) state, “Do not use very or extremely with adjectives which already *have* a strong meaning, if you want to increase the strength of these words, use absolutely or completely, totally and utterly” (pg.348). So, instead of using two strong meanings within the adjective phrase, it is better to say “absolutely urgent” or “absolutely necessary”. Ratnah (2013) found out that errors made by university students in Makasar were caused by interference, overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restriction, and false concept hypothesized. Ihsan (1999) asserts that based on various possible sources of errors in foreign language learning as well as in second language acquisition mentioned, the intralingual errors are predominant compared to the interlingual errors. He also mentions that psychological factors like students' low motivation to learning and their bad learning strategies, and consequently, their monitoring does not work. Intralingual interference that caused *Magister* students' errors is also similar with Hariri's (2012) finding, he discovered that 51.50% of the errors' sources were caused by intralingual interference. Another intralingual aspect that contributes predominantly in students' errors was found by Kaweera (2013); false analogy, misanalysis, incomplete rule application, exploiting redundancy, overlooking co-occurrence restrictions, hypercorrection and overgeneralization were the aspects of intralingual errors that influenced students' writing compositions.

Third, *Magister* students should be more aware of rectifying the syntactic and diction errors. It seems that students were lack of awareness in correcting the errors. In fact, still found in the thesis background that the students did not alter the tenses into past tense. As Corder 1981) states that errors are as the devices for students to know how good they are in learning a language, and Ihsan (1999) who claims that errors are as the reflection for students so that they do not make the same mistakes anymore in the future. So, if *Magister* students make errors and rectify it by reading a lot of books in a regular way, they can eliminate errors in their writing, especially theses writing. By being aware of the errors, students will recognize their mistakes, then they will study harder and the flawed sentences finally can be eliminated. As a result, *Magister* students can write academic writing more professionally. The choice of appropriate words should also be attention by *Magister* students, because readers might confuse with the meaning of the sentences that they want to convey. Sajid (2016) state that postgraduate students must show mastery in English language not only in communicative competence but also in linguistic competence.

Fourth, in addition to the term fossilization, the errors that *Magister* students made were not fossilized yet. Some evidence proved that they could construct very good sentences which close to native-like competence. In other words, their IL is permeable and is easily penetrated by new linguistic forms derived both externally from input and internally through such processes such as overgeneralization (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). The writer assumes that the IL

productions of *Magister* students were still in the process of stabilization, which means that their errors were not permanent, and if they keep continue learning, the errors may be eradicated. In relation to that, Fauziati (2011) confirms that IL errors of Indonesian secondary school students grade twelve who are learning English as a foreign language were stabilized just temporarily. It means that the stabilized errors could be eliminated (destabilized). However, some of the IL errors of Indonesian secondary students were likely fluctuated and even destabilized, it is due to the fact that her study was done in three different stages. Stabilized errors of her students were similar with the present study which revealed that the errors that *Magister* students made were not permanent and would keep enhancing as long as they continue learning.

Last but not least, lecturers' attentions are needed towards errors made by the students. Despite the fact that some students have mastered the grammar, but some others might have not. Thus, teachers/lecturers are responsible to identify and correct the errors. As stated by Darus and Subramaniam (2009), EA can help the teachers to identify in a systematic manner the specific and common language problems students have, so that they can focus more attention on these types of errors. Because teachers will get an overall knowledge about the students' errors, the teacher should learn to tolerate some errors (Fang & Xue-Mei, 2007). Likewise, regarding syntactic errors found in academic writing, Usha and Kader (2016) exclaim that the teaching of academic writing could be placed more importantly or written within the syllabus. They also state that for ESL learners, syntax should be to be taught effectively and systematically, the teacher factor is crucial. Suhono (2016) and Dipolog-Ubanan (2016) emphasize that the lectures or teachers should respect the students' errors and give guidance to the students, and be aware of the difficulties students face in the process of writing in order to help them overcome these difficulties in teaching and learning process.

## Conclusion

Regarding the errors made by *Magister* students, some conclusions could be drawn. First, *Magister* students of Sriwijaya University still made errors in their theses writing in terms of syntax and diction. The errors were classified by Linguistic Surface Category and Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed based on Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982). Of the 238 sentences, 283 were detected as syntactic and diction errors. The kinds of syntactic errors were subject-verb agreement, tenses, gerund, passive, article, preposition, word order, redundancy, parallelism, modality, noun, verb, pluralization, relative pronoun, possessive pronoun, correlative conjunction, and syntactic ambiguity. 261 (89%) errors were classified as syntactic errors, and 33 (11%) were diction errors. Ignorance of rule restriction, false analogy and overgeneralization are the three possible causes of syntactic and diction errors made by *Magister* students of Sriwijaya University. Be more aware of the syntactic and diction errors, more frequent in practicing academic writing, keep learning English grammar and academic writing, revise and edit the theses continuously and concern more of the syntactic and diction errors are the possible solution to eliminate the errors. Emphasizing more assignments in academic writing can be applied by the lecturers of higher

education not only to know the students' ability, but also to train students to write academically. Further, faculty of teacher training of education should hold seminar and workshop that relate to academic writing for both graduate and undergraduate students to motivate them to write and enhance their knowledge about writing academically.

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